

Proverbs 4

Sunday 3/23/2014

Last couple of weeks, we have looked at the great contrast presented in Proverbs chapter 4 on the results of walking on the paths of righteousness and the result of walking on the paths of unrighteousness. I told you there are only two ways to go through life. They may look like there are a million different avenues of life, but when it all comes down to it, there are only two. It is either walking on the path with the Lord and the Word of God and His principles, or walking your own way with the things of the world. There are only two ways to go.

You remember I gave you the six admonitions found in Proverbs 4:14-15 that Solomon gave us, and they are great advice on keeping yourself on that path. We saw, and I laid out, how that if you follow these, it is going to provide some things for you. It will provide a buffer against the temptations in life, and temptations in life are always going to be there. There will never be a time on this side of heaven where we do not have to deal with it. It will provide a check on our passions, a block to the sins in our lives that give us problems, and how these principles will sharpen our conscience to follow the process of biblical principles in our lives.

I showed you the great story in the Old Testament in Judges about Samson. His life is such a picture of our lives in the New Testament, and we certainly saw how he got off the path that God had for him. He was supposed to be a Nazarite, separated unto a life unto God, and yet he got off that path and caused all kinds of problems. I laid out last week how that sin in his life, and certainly in a spiritual way in our life, how that sin blinds us. He got his eyes put out. The Philistines, who picture the world, bound him with chains and ropes, and he could not break them—a picture of the world binding you. Then they hooked him up to a grist mill that grinds wheat, and for the rest of his life, he was destined to go around in a circle and never change anything that he did. I showed you how that is a picture of sin in our lives today: how sin will blind us, how sin will bind us, and then sin will grind us. It is a great study in the Bible.

I. Opening Prayer and Scripture Reading

Today, we are going to close out this chapter and read and examine, and then we are going to make some comments on the last section of verses. I want to pick it up in Proverbs 4:20 today, and it says this:

Proverbs 4:20-27

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Father, we thank you and praise you today for the Lord Jesus, and we love you. We thank you for the folks that have come out today, and we pray now as we open up the book. Lord, our whole goal here in this church is just to help people have a better relationship with you. Lord, we know that nothing will do that other than the Word of God. There are a lot of things out there today that churches, pastors, and people talk about, but Lord, there will be nothing that will take the place of that intimate relationship of just knowing your Word. So help us today in what we do today, and what we do on Thursday, and all the many one-on-one sessions that we have, and discipleship, and all of the things that we try to do to help people in the Word of God. Help us. Help us to put it all together. Help these people to grow, to love you as they love your Word. Lord, may they be found productive in their lives because that is the reason that you saved them. We will be careful to give you all the honor and the praise and the glory in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

II. The Three Applications of "My Son"

Now I want you to notice Proverbs 4:20 says again, "My son." This is the ninth time we have found this in our four chapters. I told you how that when you want to understand the book of Proverbs, you have to look at it in the three ways that all of the Bible lays itself out.

1. The Bible lays itself out in a historical application. In a historical application, he is writing to his son, Rehoboam. So he says, "My son."
2. In a doctrinal application, we have been studying this on Thursday night. In fact, we just studied last week God's relationship to the nation of Israel. "My son" here doctrinally will be the nation of Israel. He is giving Israel instructions, and in Exodus 4, in a corporate sense, I told you this is one of the ways that you study the nation of Israel. You study it as "My son."
3. In a practical application, in an inspirational format, he is talking to you and me. We can make the spiritual application to our lives because through a new birth, through trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal Savior, we too are God's sons today. So that is how the whole thing really lays itself out.

In fact, I have told you this before, the first seven chapters of Proverbs really do not have any proverbs in them. The proverbs do not start until Proverbs 8. It is all instructions. It is all how to get your heart, your life on the right path and the right things so that when we get to Proverbs 8, you can really grasp and take in the real truths of the Word of God so we can receive, as we have been studying, instructions of the Lord.

III. The Issues of Life and Their Source

Now I want to center our message today around one of the verses in this chapter, and we will kind of just work around on both sides of it. It is a verse that I think is probably one of the most important principles to understand in dealing with life, especially those of you who have committed yourselves with me to work with people and with all the issues of life and all of the

things that it contains. This is probably one of the greatest truths. I personally think this verse is probably the key to everything in life for a Christian, in my own opinion. It is found in Proverbs 4:23 where he says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

The issues of life—what a subject! We are in this world, whether you are saved or whether you are lost, and issues will come up. In the ministry, and dealing with people and their problems, and trying to help them and trying to get them through some things and establish them in a new life or a new set of principles, it will always be around this simple principle: what you are up against, what you are going to have to deal with, are the issues of life. When we do not follow the paths of righteousness in life, then believe me, we are going to have some issues in life.

It will develop issues in three basic areas of your life. When you work with people, when I work with people, it is not complicated; it is just understanding some of these simple, basic things. Let me explain it to you.

4. A life of sin or off the path of righteousness will always develop emotional issues in our lives. Proverbs 25:28

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, and without walls. If you do not have control of your emotions, if you do not have your emotions in check by the principles of the Word of God that dictate how you feel about circumstances and how you approach circumstances, you are going to have some problems. You are going to have some issues in your life. It is an incredible aspect that a life of doing it your own way, a life of deciding how you are going to do it, when you are going to do it, where you are going to do it, is going to develop some emotional issues.

5. A life of sin will develop some physical issues. Galatians 6:8

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. There is not just an emotional trauma in a life off the path of righteousness, but there are physical things. You cannot have emotional problems without it affecting you physically. The first time you get a phone call at two o'clock in the morning, and you are feeling fine, or anytime during the day, and you are on the top of the world and you are having a great time, and you get one phone call of some disaster or something that happened in your family or someone you love or close to you, and immediately it affects you physically. You get that sick feeling in your stomach, and it affects you emotionally. You cannot get off the path of righteousness and not have it affect you in your emotional issues of life and in your physical issues of life.

6. A life off the path of God's righteousness will develop spiritual issues in your life. 1 Peter 2:11

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; These three areas are where you have the problems. In time, these issues will become a cocktail mix, if you please. You hear a lot today about people dying by taking a cocktail mixture of drugs. A lot of the movie stars that died recently, when they finally do the autopsy and find out what killed them, they will find out that they took five or six different drugs. Michael Jackson died that way. He took five or six different drugs that each one by itself was okay, but you mix them in what they call a cocktail where you take

eight or nine different drugs at the same time. The compounding effect of all those drugs on your system takes your life. In time, these issues of emotional issues, spiritual issues, and physical issues will develop themselves through the issues of life that they bring a cocktail mix of emotional problems, physical problems, and spiritual problems. They will in time destroy you. It is just that simple. A life off the path of God's righteousness never gets any better; it only gets worse. It only compounds itself. It only develops itself. The emotional problems do not go away. You do not fix them by buying something new and feeling good for a short period of time. You do not fix it by just going out and reading some kind of book on how to self-improve yourself. It does not happen that way. These things are tied back to a spiritual relationship that you need to have with God. When you do not have it, it will produce areas of your life that you struggle with. These are the issues of life that we have to deal with.

IV. The Heart as the Single Source of Issues

Now the great lesson out of these principles here in Proverbs 4:20-27, and the thing that I hope you take with you today, is that the issues that we all have, whether they are emotional, physical, or spiritual, I hope that you see this: that the issues that we all have go back to a single source. That single source is our attitude of heart. It is simply that simple. That is why Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

In the world we live in, I do not put a lot of stock in these medical guys that come on the television. One day they will tell you that coffee will kill you, and then the next month they come out and say it will prolong your life. They will tell you one day that it is no good, and then the same thing that they told you, three months later there will be another study. It all comes down to, they do not know what they are talking about. But it always amazed me how that they continually will come up with the number one killer of somebody. The number one killer with women at some point will be breast cancer. With men, it will be prostate cancer. It will be lung cancer, it will be this, it will be that. Now the big kick is the number one killer of men in America is heart disease. Having a heart attack, heart issues, are the number one killer of men in America. But I want to say to you on the authority of the Word of God, as the attending physician to this church in a spiritual sense, I can tell you that heart disease has always been the number one killer of men and women spiritually, because it all goes back to your heart. It all starts there.

We do not understand how important that is many, many times. I do not think we do. Life is so complicated today. When God did it all, He did it in a very simplistic way. Anybody know what the theory of Occam's Razor is? He was a philosopher who lived back in the 1200s to 1300s. He came up with the idea that even police use today when they are faced with a crime to solve. His theory was that when you have all of these different areas out there and you do not have any real truth about anything, the simplest one is usually the right answer. That is so true. I do not know if he was a Christian or not, but I know that that is based on the Bible because the best life you can have will be the simplest life you can have. God's plan of life was a garden. It was the murderer

who created the city. God's plan is always simple. God's path of righteousness is always a simple way.

In our society, the older we get, the more we want to have. You go to the mall many times, you just walk through the mall to see what you do not have. You are constantly bombarded in your eyes on TV and billboards of what you do not have. We have this desire that you see on bumper stickers on cars, usually trucks, about their toys: "The older the boys, the bigger their toy," and all that stuff. "Who dies with the most toys wins," but that is not true. You want to meet the happiest people in the world? Go down to the Smoky Mountains someplace and watch and talk to people that live in a log cabin that do not have power, electricity, they have us beat hands down. Their life is so much simpler. Our life is so complicated. The more stuff we have, the more you worry about somebody taking it from you. The more stuff you have, the more you have to maintain it. The more stuff you have, you have to put it away when you are done with it. It is a thing where the simplest life is the best life.

In our world that we live in, it is always a thing where now it is heart disease. Yes, it has always been heart disease because the Bible says that the issues of life start in our hearts. When we know about the heart, Jeremiah 17:9 says:

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Mark 7:21 says that the things that defile a man will come from his heart.

The answer obviously to all this is to get saved. Even in salvation and getting saved, it takes getting a new heart. Romans 10:9-10, very familiar verses, says:

Romans 10:9-10

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

You have people out there, I meet them all the time, they say, "I am saved." When you start to ask them about salvation, they do not know one thing about what happened the day they got saved. They do not know what sin is. They do not know how it works. We live in a world that salvation, the most simplest thing in the world, has been made so complicated.

Then after you get salvation in your heart, what do you do? Then you start a process of getting the Bible, Bible principles, and you hide them in your heart. As Psalms 119:11 says:

Psalms 119:11

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Because Proverbs 23:7 says:

Proverbs 23:7

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.

As Matthew 12:34 says:

Matthew 12:34

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

You see, the manifestation of a heart will always be seen outwardly in our lifestyle, what we talk about. That is why the Bible says that we are to keep it with all diligence.

The Christian life and the attitude of heart is everything. I do not know if you are aware of this or not, but in the Bible alone, there are over 800 times it makes a reference to man's heart. The issues of life will always start in the heart, and as you allow yourself to be influenced by wrong things, in time it takes your heart away from God. We saw it on Thursday night with the nation of Israel. Now you are on the wrong path of a way of life, and we have talked about that for the last couple of weeks on Sunday morning. The issues that confront us in life are not the things from the world, the flesh, and the devil directly, but through the attitude of our heart about those things. When we allow them, as we saw last week, to enter into our lives, what does it do? It gives us an opportunity, an open door to walk through to do the wrong things.

This is why I talk about all the time the importance of getting God's mind. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." We have the mind of Christ, the principles of the Word of God that act to dictate through your spirit, through your soul, all of the things that we are supposed to do. The six admonishments that I gave you last week: changing the pattern of how you think, looking at things from God's perspective, quitting looking at it from your own perspective, thinking how to respond to something through biblical principles, then to react to it through your own personal human spirit. This is the real issue in daily living. The real issues of daily living are simply to protect our heart and our heart attitude.

All the crises that we have in life, and we have some crises, do we not? All the drama that we have in life, we have some drama. All of the turmoil, all the heartache for so many people that they experience, and even in their families. The worry that we all go through. God's people who ought to be on top of the world having depression, going to psychiatrists or therapists, getting put on some kind of Prozac Christianity where the Word of God gives you everything that you need. The bitterness that people hold into their lives. The anger that they have over things that should have been forgiven and forgotten years ago. The frustration that people go through in dealing with circumstances. People can be frustrating. But the only place you are ever going to go to a place where there is no frustration with people is a place where there are no people. You forget how frustrating we were to God the first time God began to deal with us. Envy, jealousy, fear, anxiety, the issues of family problems, marital problems, the issues of broken relationships. When these things affect your emotional side, your physical side, and your spiritual side, your cocktail mix of these things produces your own personal little hell on earth, and you struggle

with them every day. In every case, in every case without exception, it will start in your heart and manifest itself as the issues we face in life that defeat us so easily. The compounding effect of a lethal spiritual concoction or a cocktail of spiritual problems, emotional problems, and physical problems, left unchecked and not knowing how to deal with them.

You have heard me say this many times: there are not very many victims in life. I deal with people's problems all the time, and somebody always is trying to portray themselves as a victim. I understand that there are cases where somebody is a victim of things, in bad marriages or bad relationships or parents that pretty much do not have a clue that the real victims will always be the children. I understand that. But in life and the things that we deal with as adults, there are very few victims, but we love to play the victim role. We do. I do. We all do. Because when you play the victim, what it does, it takes any accountability away from you. Then you do not have any responsibility for the problem because you are the victim. If you walk out of church here this afternoon and somebody mugs you, you are pretty much a victim there. Now, if you are down someplace in the hood where you should not be at two o'clock in the morning and you get mugged, what do you expect? So there are not a lot of victims in a lot of things, but there are a few every once in a while. But we love to play the victim role.

There was a time when drugs and alcohol were dealt with as sin, and it was looked at and preached as sin. It is not that way anymore. Now, they are telling you that if you are an alcoholic or you are a drug addict, that it is in your genes. It is in your family makeup. It is in everybody in your family that had a history of it down the line. So you know what? You have a pretty good chance of getting cancer, just like if your dad or all your family dies of cancer. I get that. Cancer is a disease, but alcoholism and drugs are a sin. You do not need your mommy and your daddy and your aunt and your uncle to be drug addicts and alcoholics for you to drink. You have an old sin nature that will fix that for you right there on the spot. What you need in that case is the Word of God to undo what we all have in our old sin nature. But you see, when you take that position that "I am a victim, it was my mom and my dad and my aunt and my uncle and all those people that were alcoholics and drug abusers, and now here I am, I am a victim," you take responsibility out of your life for it. There is no accountability. You always can blame it on somebody else.

You find the same thing in the homosexual and the lesbian world. "God sent me down the wrong escalator, the wrong elevator, the wrong track, and I got the wrong parts, and I am really a woman, but I am going to come out a man." It just happened that way. "It is not my fault." No, not at all. Now there are some things that are genetic and hereditary, but in the sense of your sin, it always starts in your heart. It does not start with your parents. It does not start with your mom or your dad or your aunt or your uncle. Sin starts in your heart, and out of the heart comes the issues of life. But when we want to get out of that, not take any responsibility, and be satisfied with what we are so we can continue to do it, we want to play the victim.

I know how it goes. I have said it many, many times, it is the Samson syndrome. Samson always portrayed himself as a victim. He always came to the place where he saw the path, he went down it, and he is always sorry, and he is always this and he is always that, but he never changes his lifestyle. I have said it many, many times, our worst enemy that we ever face will not be just the world. No, the world has its problems, and they will mess you up, but that is not your worst

enemy. Your worst enemy is not the flesh, though your flesh will give you tremendous problems. Your worst enemy is not the devil, and he is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. I understand that. I get it. Our worst enemy will always be ourselves. What we do, especially if you are saved, because if you are saved, you have or should have the Holy Spirit of God inside you to help you make the right choices. For we are totally responsible and accountable to accept and receive the instructions of God, but we simply refuse to do it.

My wife has a little sign on her refrigerator, a little magnetic sign, and I see it every day. It says, "No one can drive you crazy in life unless you give them the car keys." That is so true. Nobody will lead you astray from God until you first give them the keys to your life. The keys to your life will be your attitude of heart. When you start loving somebody more than God, something more than God, then you are in trouble. I have seen it all in my life when a girl will get with a guy or a guy will get with a girl. I can tell if they are headed down the wrong road. I have seen girls that when they find the guy in their life, or the guy finds a girl in his life, they will spend all day long talking to him on the phone. They do not go a day without talking four or five hours. The problem with that is, I guarantee you, you never took four or five hours to talk to God every day. They want to be with them all day long, do everything, think about them. I guarantee you, you never thought about God to that great degree that you wanted to be with Him and spend all that time with Him and give Him all that time that you are giving that guy or giving that girl. The problem is somebody stole your heart. When your heart is where it needs to be, it does not get moved. You work things through your heart, not around your heart.

You never give your heart to somebody. I know we say on Valentine's Day, "We all gave our heart away." If you did what I did, you go down to the store, "Yep, that will work," out the door you go. The bottom line is this, we talk about that, you cannot give your heart away to somebody else unless you take it from God first. It is just the way it is. Every problem we have, every issue in life that we face, starts right in here. It starts with our heart. When you give somebody else your heart, just like you give somebody your car keys, it is tough for me to say, "Officer, he stole my car." They finally pull a guy over and get the guy out, and the guy says, "Yeah, I took it. Here are the keys." "Well, where did you get the keys?" "Well, he gave them to me." It is hard to get a conviction that somebody stole your car when you gave him the keys. It is hard to get a conviction that you are the victim in things when you gave your heart to something else or somebody else. It is the key to your life. The Bible says that out of that heart are the issues of life. You misplaced it, put it over here, do not be diligent with it, you are going to have some issues. It is just that simple. You are going to have some issues.

V. Seven Admonitions for the Issues of Life

Now in Proverbs 4:23-27, you are going to find seven great admonitions on the issues of life. What a subject! A biblical process to keep yourself from all the issues that will drop you in your tracks spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Here is a great study on the principles of the issues of life.

7. Keep thy heart with all diligence. He says, "Keep your heart," worry about your own heart, not somebody else's. I do not know how many of God's people I meet, they are always

worried about somebody else. They are always saying, "Well, they are doing this," or "They are doing that." You need to worry about yourself. You do not need to be out there reading somebody else's heart. You do not have a meter reader on somebody else's attitude of heart. Most people out there talking about everybody else, or telling everybody else, you need to worry about your own. He says there, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." The Bible says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul." That is the hardest thing you will ever try to do in life. It takes diligence, but it must be done. Diligence is self-control, something not too many people have today. Diligence is self-motivation, something most people do not have today. Diligence is self-determination: "I am going to do this because it is right," instead of doing this that is maybe not right. Not much of that today. It is self-discipline: "I am going to structure myself. I am going to have things in my life that I am going to follow." There is not much of that today. You are working every day to keep your heart in the right place. The Old Testament is filled with stories that illustrate New Testament principles. I have always been amazed at the book of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra and Nehemiah are books that are written, and they go along with what we studied Thursday night. When Israel goes into captivity in 721 BC, the Northern tribes, in 606 BC, the Southern tribes, they are gone for 70 years. This is where the book of Esther comes in. The book of Esther leads us to the book of Ezra and then the book of Nehemiah in the scheme of things. What you have there is Esther is the queen, and she paves the way for the king to let Israel go back after 70 years, and a small remnant goes back. Ezra and Nehemiah have always been two great books for me in my own personal life because in Ezra they build the temple. In an Old Testament nation of Israel, the temple is everything. They have absolutely nothing with God if they do not have the temple. Everything that Jew, the nation of Israel, had with God runs through the priesthood, through that temple, which is situated in Jerusalem. So the first thing they build is the temple. Then the next thing they begin to build once they start the temple is, in the book of Nehemiah, they begin to build the wall around the city. In any city in the Old Testament, they have a wall around it. That wall in some cases was 60, 70, 80, 100 feet high, 40 feet thick. What it does, it had certain gates, but it limited access to the city. When another nation would attack them, they just walled up, shut the doors, locked everything down, and they could not get over the wall. They put their archers on top and they shoot them, and they could not get in. Another way they did it, they just laid siege to it. I think the first time Nebuchadnezzar came down to Jerusalem to take it, he came down three times. One of the times he came down, he just laid siege to it for two years. He just circled it. Nobody in, nobody out, no food in, no food out. Nobody gets in, nobody gets out, and he starves them out. That was the downside of the wall. When you study Jerusalem, Jerusalem was the city that was crucial to the nation of Israel. So they built the wall. The wall protected the city. They put watchmen on the walls, if you study the book of Ezekiel and Isaiah. Those watchmen looked out there for anything that would harm, and they would sound the alarm if anything would come. They actually came to the place where the elders sat at the main gate, and they scrutinized everybody coming in and coming out, making sure nobody undesirable came in. That wall around that city, that temple that they build, is a picture of your body. It is really a picture of your attitude of heart because your body is nothing with God if you do not have the right attitude of heart toward God. Just as the city of

Jerusalem was nothing without the temple, your body for God is nothing without your attitude of heart being in the right place. So you know why they built the wall? They built the wall to protect the city that protected the temple. We just took a couple of weeks ago, Isaiah 28, and I showed you about how that you laid a principle upon principle, doctrine upon doctrine, here a little, there a little, and I likened that to building a wall. The wall around Jerusalem is a picture of you building the wall of biblical principles around your life. It keeps the undesirables out. It protects you, your temple. That wall you build around you, every one of them, of course, is a biblical principle and a doctrine that you learn that you put around you. When outside influences come, somebody tries to get you to do this or somebody tries to get you to be part of this, it bounces off that wall when it cannot penetrate. It is your protection. A city without a wall is broken down, as so many of God's people today. The reason why they never get the victory in their life to be whatever God wants them to be, and He has something for you, every one of you, if you are saved here, He has something for you. He has something He wants to accomplish in our life, but He will never be able to do it. You know why? Because you have no wall around your temple. You not only have no wall, you do not even lock the windows or the back screen door. The things of this world just have their way with you. There is absolutely no protection in your life whatsoever. He just kicks you six ways from Sunday. When somebody comes in and wants to be part of your world or somebody wants to influence you to go do this or be that, you do not even have the wherewithal to discern if you should even do it or not. Even the basic fundamental principles are not there. I have seen people that have been in churches for 20, 30 years, and when it came to problems and issues in their life, they have to live in a little bubble someplace down in New Mexico because they have no protection against anything because they never learned anything in their life of how to make good choices. When something comes in their life that they like, they throw everything they have to the wind and then wonder why they have the issues of life they have. That is the way it works. He says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence."

8. Put away from thee a froward mouth. "Froward" means reluctant. It means like a perversion, not willing to yield or comply with what is required or what is right. A froward mouth is an unyielding mouth, an ungovernable mouth, totally disobedient. It says "the mouth," and that is because the Bible says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." So it all goes back to the heart. In a context here, it can be your own mouth that you need to get control over: "I do not like this. I do not like that. I do not like her. I do not like him." Or it can be people you associate with, like we saw last week, Psalms 1, walking in the counsel of the ungodly, that you listen to, take instruction and counsel from. Either way, it is not a good deal. Negative talk will always produce negative people. It is a simple principle of life. In my life, I have to deal with a lot of negative things that none of you ever have to confront or have to deal with. I have to deal with a lot of negative things. Some of you who work with me one-on-one, you understand what I am saying. You do too, of course. But in my personal life, I make a clear distinction between the two, and I allow, in my own personal life, I allow no negative people in my world. I just know me too well. I simply will not allow myself to associate with that element. It is nothing against them; it is not good for me. At the end of the day, I have to give an account to God for me and my attitude of heart, not for yours. I want

positive people around me. I want happy people. I want bubbly people. I want people who are excited about the Word of God. I want people who cannot wait to get here on Sunday morning, cannot wait to hear, because that is the way I am. I have to go through all the labor of spending nine or ten, 14 hours all week, putting it all together, and I still get excited about coming in and being part of the Bible. I want people around me that will always be people who cannot wait to see what God is doing, tell you what God is doing in their life. That is what the pain is. Positive people, people who are excited about God, excited about what God is doing in their life. There are a million people that I come into contact with in my life, and I am exaggerating, not a million, there are two million, they cannot wait to tell you the latest dirt that they just heard. I am not interested in that. I am just not. I mean, you talk about a dirt devil. I am not into that. I just do not. Vacuum cleaner Christians, they suck up every piece of dirt there is. When the bag gets full, when the old bag gets full, she wants to put it out on everybody else. Put away from thee a froward mouth. Be around people who are going to edify you, be around people who are going to make you better at what you want to be, not worse. I want people in my life who are going to sharpen me. I want people in my life who are going to help me be better because they want to be better. Iron sharpeneth iron, the Bible says.

9. Let thine eyes look right on and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. In the book of Song of Solomon, it is probably the most intimate book in the Bible, written to you and me to explain one, how the Lord really thinks about me, and two, what I should really think about Him. It is a breakdown, a dissertation where God takes some time and He actually tells me, "Bob, when I see you, this is how I feel toward you." It is amazing. Then He also gives me, "Bob, when you think of me, this is how I want you to look at me." It gives me some incredible stuff. Personally, I will be honest with you, and I know I mean what I am saying here, I do not think you will ever have a meaningful relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ to His pleasing until you understand the book of Song of Solomon and you can put it together in your life and see those things. It is incredible. We did a Bible study on it. There is a book on it back there we did a number of years ago. I did it early on for that reason. Song of Solomon 5:12 says: Song of Solomon 5:12

His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. Doves are a type of the Holy Spirit. He says, "by the river of waters washed with milk." You get blurry vision because you get the dirt of this old world in your eyes. You look at things in this old world and you get dirt, but blurry vision will not do it spiritually. You have to wash your eyes out with milk, a type of the Word of God in the Bible. Then he says, "and fitly set." Eyes right on, eyes fitly set. Eyelids look straight before thee. That simply means seeing things as they really are, not as they appear to be. Most Christians suffer from double vision. Most Christians suffer from a double standard in their life. They never learned to look at any given situation and see it with eyes straight on, fixed, fixed not only on the circumstances, but fixed on the principle that defines the circumstances. That is what you are talking about. I love the book of Daniel. In the early part of the book of Daniel, Daniel is up against the best that Babylon has to offer. We know that Babylon is the type of the world. Whenever Nebuchadnezzar wants to put Daniel to the test, Daniel says, "You know what? I do not want to eat the crap of Babylon. You let me eat what I have been eating as a Jewish

boy, and you let your people go ahead and do their thing. At the end of a period of time, you put us together, and we will find out who is better." The thing that he was eating over there, it is all the type of the Word of God. It is a picture of a child of God whose whole diet consists of the Word of God in his life. He will not have the things of Babylon. So a time came, put them all together. The Bible says that Daniel was up against the wisest that Babylon ever had. But it always struck me that when it was all said and done, Daniel, the Bible says, was ten times better than the best that Babylon could offer. You give me a child of God. You give me a young gal. You give me a young guy. You give me somebody who wants the Word of God and wants to learn it. You give me about three years of their life, and I will give you somebody back that is ten times better than anything the world has got to offer. Just that simple. You know who he was up against? The Bible, I love this. The Bible says that Nebuchadnezzar called in his magicians. Now I have some news for you. There are no real magicians. There was a movie out, it is on TBS, you have to watch it. It has Tony Curtis in it about the great Houdini. Houdini probably was the best. You do not even know who Houdini is. You think he was Mussolini's brother. He was the greatest magician of the world. But in this movie, and then I read his life story years ago, it shows you that this guy did some incredible things. He was going to escape from handcuffs in a box that was chained around and put down in the Hudson River off of New York, and the chain broke, and he fell down to the bottom, and they could not find him. It was covered with ice. They had to cover an owner of ice, and for four hours, they did not find him. The newspapers were putting out, "Houdini died. He died. He died." Then four hours later, he pops to the surface. He made a hundred million dollars off of that. It was not a trick, but he told later how he did it. When he got out of there, he could not find the hole. So what he did was he got up to the ice and he found pockets of ice that had air in them. For three and a half hours, he kept breathing through that, then tried to find a hole. Finally, he found it. The water was like 32 degrees. This idiot would get in a bathtub, and they would bring ice in and ice him down in cold water for hours so he could stand it. But it was all an illusion. David Copperfield was a great magician. He made a 747 disappear. I wonder where he was the night that Malaysian flight took off. Anyway, there are no magicians. They are illusionists. All a magician does is give you an illusion that something happened that did not happen. When Daniel went up against the magicians, the Word of God held true. I am telling you, in this world we live in, everything you think out there is real is an illusion. It takes the Word of God and eyes fitly set, eyelids right on, to see what it really is, instead of seeing the illusion. I am telling you, the Word of God will always give you the reality of things as they really are without any illusion involved. But some people love illusion. They do. "Oh, I am okay," when you are not. "Well, my marriage is fine," when it is not. "Oh, my kids are saved," when they are not. "My relationship is okay with God," when it is not. The dream world of Christianity. This is why people do not like Bible-believing churches or Bible-believing preachers because the Word of God strips the illusion from you. You may come in here with an illusion of one thing; you will leave without that illusion. That is what the Word of God does. Do not get mad at me.

10. Ponder the path of thy feet. You walk down life's road, the path of life. We know now that there are two paths. This basically is talking about putting goals in your life of things spiritual, setting some benchmarks along the pathway, measuring your spiritual growth, not

just being satisfied that you are on the path, but you want to continue to be and keep going where God wants you to go. One of my favorite personal verses is in Luke 2:19. It is one of my most intimate verses in my heart. I catch myself a hundred times a day with situations that I am faced with. It is about Mary. Mary had given birth to the Lord Jesus Christ. The wise men had come, and the angels and everybody were talking about "Glory to God in the highest," and they brought Him the gold and the frankincense and the myrrh and all that stuff. They lined up to all the three offices of Christ. She has been told now that all this stuff, and it has to be an overwhelming day. She just had a child. Now here come strangers from the East and everybody else around. There is a whole choir of angels out there singing. It is incredible. She is taking all of that in. Now she is faced with the contemplation that she has given birth to the Messiah. The Bible says in that great verse: Luke 2:19

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. That is one of the greatest verses in the Bible for me, pondering things that God has done in your life, in your heart. The Bible talks about keeping your heart right with God. One of the ways you will keep it is not to forget what God has done, pondering. Thinking about God should be your favorite pastime. My favorite daydream is thinking about what God has done. Many of you come over one-on-one with me on a regular basis. I know you think you get a lot from me, but it is a two-way street. Many of you sit down, and you will start asking questions, or we will start going through something in the Bible. Your questions and your angle that you have come at it as a way that I have never seen it before, it will open doors for me. I may have a busy night that night and the next night, but all the time, and I may not even get around to what we talked about until maybe a week later. But I am telling you, every day of my life, I am pondering about that thing that we talked about until I get in there to work it down in my Bible. I think pondering on the things of God is probably the key to everything in our life, our attitude of heart. It is certainly the key to a peaceful life that we have with God in a non-hecktic world or in a hectic world. Isaiah 26:3 says: Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

11. Let all thy ways be established. We saw a couple of weeks ago when I laid out the thing about Samuel back there in 1 Samuel 3, the process of God calling you and how the Bible said that in time God established him. In our ministry here, this is where, when God does this in your life, this is where you become invaluable to our work here. I will say it again, because every time you start talking about me, you always get people to say, "Well, you know what so and so, what I do." I know. I will say it one more time. Get it down this time. There are no perfect people, okay? There are no perfect people. There are no perfect pastors. There are no perfect churches. So that being said, if you ever find a perfect church, do not join it because you will mess it up. But there will be people who struggle with the same flesh that you and I have. There will be people who struggle with the same issues of life that we have, who will yield themselves to the principles, who will give themselves to the things of God and His Word and to this ministry. In time, as they grow, in spite of the fact that they are not perfect, in spite of the fact they have an old nature, in spite of the fact that they struggle with things in life, because they are consistent and they are growing, in time, God will bring them to a point that He will establish them. Brother, that is when you start to get some things done for God. You

see the difference in a glance. You see it in their families, their kids, their children are in church beside them. They love the Lord. They are all saved. You see the difference in their attitude of heart toward the Word of God. Everything in their life revolves around the Bible. I have had people come to this church before and talk to them afterwards, and they say, "Well, I really liked it, but you guys do, everything is around the Bible." No kidding. But I understand where that comes from in the world that we live in today. You see the people whose lives attract, because their lives are real. They see the difference. I think one of the greatest examples I keep hearing over and over again, from the people that I get to work with, that your life impacted them, that they would not be here because of me, would not be here because of you, not me, is that when I start to sit down and talk, and it happens all the time, I sit down and talk with them. The first thing they start telling me, "Well, I was with so and so," and we know them. "His wife or him told us that their life, their marriage was on the rocks, everything was a mess. Until they got God and got the things of God and got the Word of God in their life." Your own struggles that you went through now become the very thing that is the catalyst for somebody else. When they see the difference in your life, when they see the difference in your children, when they see the difference in your family, when they see the difference in your marriage, they want it. They want it. Every aspect of your life, God establishes you. I will tell them all the time, I will tell couples all the time, they are sitting there, and they have some marriage issues they have to work with or some problems. I will tell them after they tell me that, I will say, "You know what? In two years' time, a year and a half time, if you keep doing what the Word of God says, and you continue to love it the way you appear to love it and the way you go after it, you know what is going to happen? You will be sitting down with somebody, and you will be helping them through the same things that you are going through, because that is the way God does. He establishes people. He does not establish you because you are good looking. In that case, you all are out of the boat. He does not establish you based on how much money you have. He establishes you based on your willingness to give Him your attitude of heart and love Him and get that Word in your life and let God change about you what needs to be changed, and through the process of spiritual growth, He establishes you. Let all thy ways be established."

12. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left. This goes back to the path of life we talked about last week and even today. God, when we get saved, has a course of life for all of us. We talk a lot about it, and in our discipleship, I think it is lesson six, we deal with God's will and God's plan for your life. Most people think they are the same. Of course, if you know your Bible, you know they are not. God has a plan for every one of you, and that plan is different. God has a plan for you, but it is not the same plan for him. Gary, God has a plan for you; it is not the same plan as Jean. God has a plan for you, but it is not the same plan for her. Josh, He has a plan for you, but not the same as Kevin. Everybody's plan that God has is different. He has something different He wants you to do. So your plan may be different, but when it comes to the will of God, that will be the same for everybody. The will of God is always that God wants you to be more like Jesus Christ every day of your life in everything that you do, everything that you think, every place you go. When you work at fulfilling the will of God in your life, then God through that process will fulfill God's plan in your life. You will never mess up being where God wants you to be. You never will. I am telling you, if you are saved

here this morning, you may never get there. I do not know. I hope you do. You may never make it, but it will not be because God does not want you to make it. It will not be because God does not have a plan for you. If you are saved this morning, God has a plan for every man and every woman sitting under the sound of my voice. He has something He wants you to do, and there are no exceptions to it. When you get saved, God begins to put that, but you have to get on the path. As God fulfills His will in your life, if you fulfill your will in your life, God's will, then He fulfills the plan. But that path that you are not to turn right or left, it is called in the Bible, the straight and narrow. There is not enough latitude. You cannot get off left or right. You have to stay on the right path, not getting off into the woods someplace. My favorite movie that lays this thing out and illustrates it to me, it may not mean anything to you, but the movie to me, every time I see it, I laugh till I cry. I always think that is a picture of so many of God's people: Family Vacation with Chevy Chase. I watch that movie every time it is on, and I laugh, I have seen it a thousand times, and I still cry, laughing so hard at it. I do not know what to tell you. I do not know why. The other ones that come after it really do not, but that first one, Family Vacation, maybe it is because it reminds me of so many of God's people. I do not know. The whole family is going to Wally World, but the whole movie is one hilarious disaster after another. By the time they finally get to Wally World, it is all closed. If you look at the movie and analyze the movie, the thing that messed them up to ever get to Wally World is all the side trips that they took. Stopping off in East St. Louis at one o'clock in the morning was not a very good idea as a side trip. Getting into Kansas and spending three or four days looking for the world's biggest gopher hole was not the smartest side trip either when they wrecked the Thruster Mobile. How about the side trip with the two days with Cousin Eddie? It is the same with us. God has a goal for us that we are on a straight and narrow, but it is all those stupid side trips that we get taken. All the side trips that get us off the path of righteousness that kills us, gives us the downtime, gives us the wrong friends, the wrong places, the wrong relationships. When you stay on the right path, the road of God, you can have everything you want and be like a king. You have the very best. When you take a side trip, the Cousin Eddies, then you get hamburger helper without any hamburger in it. Just like what took Abraham that caused him all kinds of problems, they took Aunt Edna. When you go down the life road with Aunt Edna with a little dog, the dog winds up potting on your sandwiches. The side trips of life looked like they are fun. The side trips of life looked like they are great until you have to eat the sandwich. Stay on the path. Stay on the straight path. Turn not from the right or to the left.

13. Remove thy foot from evil. Galatians 5:16 says: Galatians 5:16

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. The last thing he says here is, "Watch your step." Look well to your going. Keep your mind on your own business and not somebody else's. The Bible says in Ephesians 5:15 that we as Christians are to walk circumspectly, not as fools. The Christian is to be careful how he walks and where he walks. His walk through this world will be in darkness. We know that. In that dark world, there will always be snares, pitfalls, traps, that moving through life in this darkness will get you every time. But thank God for the Word of God, for the entrance of thy word giveth light. In the dark pilgrimage of my life through this dark world, the Word of God is the lamp unto my feet, the light unto my path that shows me through the principles where

the pitfalls and the snares are. Therefore, I can avoid them. The light of the Word of God will illuminate our walk and show you where to walk and more importantly, where not to walk.

VI. Four Key Actions for Keeping Your Heart

Now let us go back to Proverbs 4:20 for a moment as we close this out today, where we started reading. He said, "My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings." Proverbs 4:21 says, "Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart." Now I leave you with these four things that we all need to do and continue to do in our relationship with God.

14. Attend to my words. Pay attention. Do not just pay attention, but be in attendance. That word has a lot of different connotations to it. Be there when the Word of God is taught. Let nothing keep you from it. Have the right attitude of heart about the Word of God. We saw in 1 Samuel 3 that Samuel let none of his words fall to the ground. I told you last week in Proverbs 4:13 that you want to keep the Word of God because the Bible says, "She is thy life."
15. Incline thine ear unto my sayings. In a moral sense, that means to learn, to go in a direction of learning. "I am inclined to go that way." A purpose in your learning to move in a specific direction of learning, to go up an incline. It takes work. You have to give extra effort. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:15, it takes you to be a workman. You have to give extra effort if you are going to learn the Word of God.
16. Let them not depart from thine eyes. Eyes are the window of the soul. The Bible says, "God says, read what I have written unto you." The light of the body is the eye. Keep the principles before your eyes, keep them before your family, your children, keep them on the refrigerator, on your sink tops, on your mirrors, on your dashboard, in your kids' rooms. Let them not depart from thine eyes. You want to bathe your eyes in the eyes of your kids and your family and the principles. Everywhere they look, they will be able to see your principles. I have been in your homes, and they are everywhere you find. You have little three by five cards, little stickums everywhere.
17. Keep them in the midst of thine heart. I guess this is probably the most important aspect of all this because the only way to keep your heart toward God is to keep His Word in the midst of your heart. Memorizing scripture is good. I understand that, but you must understand that memorizing scripture alone will not do it for you because it is not just memorizing the verses any more than it is just reading the Bible, but it is utilizing what you read. It is taking the principles and not just hiding them in your heart, but using them in your life, in every situation in your life. I have met Christians all my life that I believe they have the Word of God in their heart. I believe that they probably have memorized some scripture, but when they are faced with an issue in life, they just fall completely apart. It is simple. It is because they simply are reading it and they are memorizing it, but they are not utilizing it, and it will never do you any good receiving it first, but you have to apply it second. It does no good to memorize the principles if you do not learn to apply them in any given situation. It is just that simple. It does not do any good just to have all of this stuff that I am giving out to you if you are not going to actually learn and apply it. Every one of you is faced with scenarios every day of your life. You will not get out of here fifteen minutes, then you will have to make some choices in life, and that process will start all over again. There will be people who will

try to get you to go another way. There will be people who try to talk you out of what you want to do. There will be people in situations that you will be faced with that you have to make moral judgments on that will affect your life, your kids, your marriage if you are married. There are things that you are going to have to face today, tomorrow, and all through this next week that you alone are going to have to deal with. The thing that will make the difference in your life, in your family, in your marriage, in your children, is to understand that the issues of life come from your heart. Therefore, you have with all diligence to keep your heart. You have to do whatever you have to do, and there is only one way to do that, and that is to keep the Word of God in the midst of your heart. Develop an attitude that you love that book more than anything on this planet. Want to spend time with that book more than any man or any woman that ever walked this planet. The moment you do not, you are in trouble. The moment you want to go to this or you want to go to that or you want to do this, and I am not saying there is anything wrong with any of that, but life has to be a balance. Anything you put in abundance more than your walk with God and the Word of God, and takes precedent over that, is going to wind you up in trouble. It is just that simple. It will give you that threefold cocktail mix of disaster. It will cause you spiritual problems, which will lead to your emotional problems, which will lead to your physical problems, and you will become a basket case. You will become a wreck. You will not be able to function in anything good over stuff that simply, if you had been applying the principles and building your catalog and operating your life in every other area, nothing shows in any of our lives. Nothing shows what we have really done with the Word of God until you are put in a situation where you are squeezed and you have to make some good moral choices based on the principles because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Attitude produces action. Whatever your attitude about the things in life is, will be the exact action that comes out of it. When your attitude is based on the principles, then whatever the situation is, your action will be right on the money. When it is not, then your actions will be all over the page and will be whatever you want to do. Nothing betrays us more than what as Christians what we do up against what the Bible says we should do. These are the issues of life.